DAWN IN AFRICA

Stories of Girl Life

1/-

MABEL SHAW

WESTBRAE BIBLE
CHURCH 1343 HOPKINS ST.
BERKELEY, CALIF. 94702

"Most gloriously worth while"

(p. 62)

Sh27d
1927

DAWN IN AFRICA

STORIES OF GIRL LIFE

BY

MABEL SHAW

AUTHOR OF
Children of the Chief

THE MASTER'S COLLEGE LIBRARY
SANTA CLARITA, CA 91321

LONDON
EDINBURGH HOUSE PRESS
2 EATON GATE, S.W.1
1927

THE girls who move in these pages are real girls, living to-day in Africa, friends of the English-woman who writes snatches of their stories for us. Some of the pictures are photographs of them.

The school village is there to-day in Northern Rhodesia, the home of Miss Shaw and of the children. This very evening may be bringing them such temptations of darkness, or fun and joy of the moonlight, as you read of in these pages.

Printed in Scotland
by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh

CONTENTS

CHAP. PAGE

I. THE DARKNESS 5
Of Mwila and Baby Musonda

II. WHERE IS THE LIGHT? 14
Of Lise Mulenga, and the Baby again

III. CANDLE LIGHTS 26
Of Lise Mulenga's Journey, and Some Memories

IV. FLICKERING CANDLES 37
Of a School, and Chungu

V. STARS IN THE NIGHT 48
Of some Ups and Downs in School, and a Great Vision

EPILOGUE 60
The Unseen and Eternal Splendour

TO GROUPS WHO READ THIS BOOK . . . 63

ILLUSTRATIONS

"MOST GLORIOUSLY WORTH WHILE" . . *Frontispiece*

"THREE TIMES IT HAD DIED AND COME BACK TO LIFE, THEY SAID" . . . . *facing p.* 16

THEIR FIRST BABY . . . . . „ 33

"CHUNGU AND HER LITTLE BETTY AS A SCHOOL-GIRL" . . . . . „ 48

O THOU Great Chief, light a candle within my heart, that I may see what is therein and sweep the rubbish from Thy dwelling-place.

DAWN IN AFRICA

Chapter I—THE DARKNESS

Of Mwila and Baby Musonda

It was a warm, golden, African evening; peace and content brooded over the village and over all the green, shining forest around it. Everyone and everything was wide awake now, for the heat of the day was over, and its toil too. The women were back from their gardens; some were coming up the path from the river with huge black clay water pots on their heads, but most of them were busy grinding flour in great wooden mortars, swaying and singing rhythmically with the rise and fall of the long heavy pounding pole.

The girls were busy, too, sharing in all the work of the women. Many of them had baby brothers or sisters tied securely on their backs in goatskins. A group of boys drummed and sang softly in the shade of a tree. The men strolled about; the elders sat talking outside the house of the head-man. There was a sense of happy expectancy, for this was the hour of the day's meal, and there was meat to eat with the thick porridge —the men had been out hunting and had brought in a large eland.

A tall youth came out of one of the little round thatched houses. He walked towards a house at the far end of the village, and then stood, quite evidently looking for some one. A group of small girls sat on the shady side of a hut, making curious clay dolls, creatures

of enormous bodies and small heads, armless and legless, but nevertheless good in the eyes of their small creators. The youth approached and greeted them courteously. They returned his greeting, and went on with their work.

" Where is Mwila, your companion ? " he asked.

" She is where she has gone."

" But where ? "

" Who knows ? Perhaps she is at her own house," said one of them, lifting her head, and pouting her lips towards a house on the opposite side of the wide pathway down the middle of the village.

The youth moved off, and the children, curious now, left their clay dolls and followed him. What did he want with Mwila ?

Outside the house three or four women were pounding flour. Namwila[1] was sitting on a reed mat, nursing a fat, contented baby girl. Mwila, a bright-faced child of eight years old, was scraping out the pot in which the porridge had been cooked.

" Mwila, they want you," her friends called out.

The child stopped her work and looked up. She was a tall, straight slip of a thing ; round her body she wore a thick coil of beads, on which hung an almost negligible skirt of leathery-looking cloth, made from the bark of a tree, well beaten and softened. A string of red and white beads bound the dark woolly head, while necklaces of elephants' hair and ivory bangles on arms and ankles proclaimed her parentage to be no mean one. Her father was one of the elders of the village, and her mother a woman well known and respected by all.

The youth greeted her and said quietly, " My friend, Mwamba, wants to see you and your friends."

The bright eyes were at once shaded by long curling lashes, the head drooped. Smiles stole over the faces

[1] The mother of Mwila.

of her companions. "Come on," they said, and followed after the tall boy.

Mwila lingered, showing no great eagerness. She looked very coy and shy, for she and her companions well knew the reason of this summons.

They went through the village and entered a house at the far end. A mat had been put down for them, and on this they sat. It was dark after the bright sunlight outside—at first they could not see anything. Mwamba, a young man of eighteen or twenty, sat on a stool. He greeted the children and began to talk to them. Mwila sat a little apart with eyes cast down. The other girls, every now and then, stole sly looks at her. But when she thought no one was looking she lifted her eyes and looked at Mwamba. Yes, he was big and strong, she liked his face. And he was clean, too, and wore a beautiful white loin cloth. True, it may have been borrowed, but how nice he looked in it! Here she dropped her eyes quickly; his head was turning in her direction. He was talking to the others, but all the time his eyes sought Mwila, for this was the girl he had decided to make his wife later on if her parents would agree. He saw the slim, straight, healthy body, the shy eyes so becomingly cast down—a meek and humble wife is greatly to be desired, boldness does not become a woman. He saw the small, neat feet and hands, and he felt well pleased with his choice. They rose to go, and scampered off laughing, saying as they looked at Mwila, now walking with a new dignity, "She's chosen."

Namwila looked at the child with content in her eyes, but said nothing. Soon the news was passed through the village that Mwila had been chosen by Mwamba, and every one seemed pleased.

Next day the same tall youth, Mwamba's friend, came

to see Mwila's parents. They received him graciously and all their friends and kinsmen gathered round to listen. Mwamba had chosen their daughter to be his wife, he now begged their permission. There was much talk and the exchange of many compliments, and then the messenger handed over to Mwila's mother a bead necklace which she accepted as a sign that they gave their consent gladly. After that day Mwamba was often to be seen in Namwila's garden, working for her, or going with Shimwila[1] into the forest to hunt and work with him. He wanted to prove to them his strength and fitness, to show by his willing service how greatly he wanted their daughter. Shimwila could now command Mwamba to do his will, even to sending him off on a long journey if so he desired, and Mwamba would not refuse. And he would work hard in his future mother-in-law's garden all day—work was the price he paid for his little betrothed.

Meanwhile Mwila, the child, played on with her companions, followed her mother to the garden, swept the house, minded the fat little baby sister, learnt to cook the food, began to care for her bark-cloth skirt, which she oiled at times to make very nice and shiny. Sometimes she took a little bit of food in a tiny pot to the spirit hut outside her house, where dwelt the spirit after whom she was named—the spirit who looked after her, and whom she must treat well if she wanted to grow strong and become a good woman of the tribe.

Two or three years passed by and Mwila grew stronger and straighter. She had not spoken to Mwamba, she always passed him with averted eyes, and she must never appear before his parents, her in-laws-to-be. The child was well brought up in all the ways of the tribe. She was now about twelve years old, old enough to leave

[1] The father of Mwila.

her mother's house and go and look after Mwamba's for him. She asked no questions, the law of her people was enough for her. She now lived in his house, swept it, swept the yard round about it. She began to prepare his food, and when he was there she was always very shy and still, though she could chatter gaily enough when her friends came to see her. She was a child no longer, and must behave like a woman.

And so another two years passed, and now it was time for her to enter into womanhood and be prepared for her marriage. She was taken from Mwamba's house to the small, dark house of her grandmother, and for six months Mwila lived in seclusion. If she went out at all, she was carried on a woman's shoulder, her whole body covered by a piece of bark-cloth. No one must see her and she must see no one. Her friends, those who had grown up with her, could come to the little hut at times, and occasionally, when no one was about, she went with them to the river to bathe. For this was her time of training for womanhood and wifehood and motherhood. All the women of her tribe had been through it. Mwila had no thought of resenting it, it was part of her life, just as much as eating and drinking were. An old woman came often to give her instruction in the ways of the women of her tribe. Sometimes curious medicine was rubbed all over her body to make her strong. The things of childhood were now left behind for ever. The time did not drag, there was plenty to eat, water when one was thirsty, sleep when the sun was hot, and for thought, why, there was the life of a woman into which she was entering. She must carry on the old traditions and bring into her tribe children to grow into good tribesmen.

The day of the wedding drew near. She heard all the preparations but took no share—she sat still in the little

hut. A goat was killed, fish was brought from the big river, there were great baskets of flour pounded by the women. Her father had made Mwila a beautiful new bark-cloth, and there were many beads and bracelets. At last the women came in to her. They washed and oiled her from head to foot, cut her hair nicely and patted it down, clothed her in the new well-oiled, beautifully sewn bark-cloth, put on all the fine beads, and then carried her singing to her husband's house. And so she became his wife, and the people feasted and sang.

Next morning at dawn an old woman brought a little pot and told Mwamba and Mwila that this must stay in their house always. It was, as it were, a little god to keep their house free from harm. There was another pot also, called the " pot of cleansing." These were to be guarded as they guarded their lives.

Mwamba and Mwila stayed in their house till sunset the next day ; then they came out to eat and to receive the advice and blessing of the elders, and after that they together took up the life of a man and woman of their tribe. Mwila still kept her girl friends, many of whom were now young wives like herself. She had a garden of her own, a large piece of ground digged by Mwamba, and now she must produce the food. There was not much time for games.

She was a proud young wife, for Mwamba was strong, and liked and respected by the other young men. Moreover, had he not said that he would not want another wife—that Mwila would content him ? But then one never knew ; perhaps when there were several children it would be good to have another woman to help in the garden and in the preparation of food. Mwila's parents were very pleased with her. She was treated with great respect, the small girls never said rude things now ; they

were so polite that Mwila began to feel she was one of the elders.

As the months passed they brought to Mwamba and Mwila the promise of a little child. And now there was even more respect for Mwila. The women were so kind and nice to her, and her parents showed their pleasure by bringing her all kinds of good food.

And then one day the little babe was born, such a scrap of a baby, quite pink, with straight black hair, but the very loveliest baby in all the world for Mwamba and Mwila. The young mother was given charms to tie on the tiny wrists and ankles, and then Mwila felt that her baby was really safe. For those charms were powerful. Had they not protected her and her mother too? They gave her baby some of the food of the tribe to see if it would take it. It did, although it seemed to be very ill afterwards, and frightened the little mother badly. But that must have been the work of some spirit or of some one who wished to harm Mwila. She must be more careful and more considerate of that spirit-house.

They sent for the witch-doctor to give her baby a name; he must find out what spirit wished to come and dwell in the child. He had a little pot and a round stone. It was all very mysterious—Mwila was afraid. The stone made a loud rumbling sound in the pot, and the witch-doctor shouted out names—Chyanda, Mulenga, Chyama, Chyungu, and many others—until, just as he had said Musonda, the noise in the pot suddenly stopped.

"That's it," he said. "Musonda is the name of the spirit who wants to come and dwell in your child."

And so the baby was called Musonda, and as she did not cry over-much, or make any fuss, the people knew she was content to have Musonda for her spirit.

. . . . . .

But the shadow of fear fell on the little house, and a great horror came to dwell in Mwila's heart. Musonda, so fat and jolly, was now six months old, and her mother, who had revelled in carrying her about and showing her off, began to leave her sleeping in the house. She would not let any one see her baby, she always had some excuse. "She is asleep," or else, "She is crying." People began to wonder and some grew suspicious. Then terrible things began to happen. Illness came to the village, and several people died; a small boy was drowned in the river, and, last of all, the rain would not come. Mwila's heart was stricken with fear beyond all telling. The spring went from Mwamba's step, and he no longer went out with the other young men. The people began to shun them, and awful things were said in their hearing. At last the chief sent for them. They could not refuse. Mwila caught her baby to her, and then tied the little, happy, gurgling thing on her back, and they went off to the chief's town, walking in a dreadful silence.

They found the chief and his head-men sitting under a little grass shelter. Many people from their own village were there—a great crowd sitting all around.

The chief called them, told them of the curse on their village, the illness, the boy drowned in the river and now—no rain over all the country.

"Why have you hidden it?" he asked.

They had no answer.

"Bring the child," he said.

Mwamba took it from the trembling mother's back. She hid her face in her hands, she dared not look. Those near the chief crowded round eagerly. Yes, they were right, there were two beautiful little white teeth at the top of the baby's mouth, none underneath. They drew back in horror. There was the cause of all the mis-

fortune—that cursed child—and there would be nothing but ill-luck as long as it lived.

There were ominous murmurings against the parents. It was a dreadful thing to have hidden a *chinkula*.[1] They might have brought death to all the village. Their duty was to go to the river straight away and drown the little thing.

" Either that," said the chief, " or take it out of my country."

When Mwamba told her that he thought they must drown their little Musonda, Mwila became like a mad thing, and he was afraid. In the end she agreed to take the child to a village many miles away in another country, where a great-aunt lived. No one would know there. The aunt would keep the child, and some day, when it was all forgotten, they would go and get their little daughter.

So they set off on a fortnight's journey through a forest without any roads, only narrow tracks leading from village to village. At last they came to the village of Shichyungu. There they found the old aunt, who said she would look after the child for them.

The young parents went back. All Mwila's girlhood had died out of her—her baby gone and her husband suspicious. Why had their baby become a *chinkula*, he questioned ? Surely it was the mother's fault ; she had been cursed too. Perhaps she had been unfaithful to him. The peace of their house was destroyed and nothing seemed left to the girl-mother.

But again, it was all part of the mystery of life—to be accepted and endured. And, after all, there is eating and sleeping.

[1] A child whose top teeth appear before the lower. It was the custom to kill such a child immediately. It was believed to be bewitched and therefore a thing of ill-omen. *Chinkulas* are still feared and still killed in secret.

Chapter II—WHERE IS THE LIGHT?

Of Lise Mulenga, and the Baby again

A girl stood at the crossing of two little paths in the forest; her red striped cloth and coloured head handkerchief made a splash of vivid colouring amidst the green. She was looking at a pot turned upside down at the cross-roads. A woman came along the little twisting path.

"Mother, what is this for?" the girl asked.

"Go on, my child, don't stand there. Don't you know it is a place to be feared? There is disease and harm lurking here—go on quickly."

Lise Mulenga hastened on, still wondering, and when they had got well beyond the spot, the mother began to tell her of the danger they had passed.

"You don't know all the things we black people do, and must do, because we have sent you to school to learn new things. The white people don't know our ways, but you must learn them all if you are to grow and thrive in our country. When a man is ill, he calls in a doctor to find out who has caused his disease. The doctor comes with all his medicines and his secrets. He takes the sick man to the cross-roads. There he lights a fire and prepares his medicines and charms. Then he rubs his patient all over with medicine, and cuts him if necessary, and then he sends him back to the village, for no one must see what the doctor now does. I can't tell you what he does either, it is his secret, but he buries the medicine at the cross-roads, and does other things

that help or harm the sick man and the one who has caused his sickness. Then he turns his pot upside down and leaves it there.

"And so, you see, the disease is there at the cross-roads for ever, and any one who lingers there may get it, therefore it is a place to be dreaded. Never linger at cross-roads, they are always places to be feared."

"But if we follow the new way the white people tell us of, the way of Jesus the Great Chief, can all these things harm us?"

"Yes, of course they can, you foolish child. The white man has his way and we have ours. You can follow his way—we want you to, it is good—just see how you are growing wise. You can read and write, that is good. You wear cloth and wash with soap, that also is good—for now you will get a husband of wealth and bring money to us. But you must keep all our old ways too, or dreadful harm will fall on you, and you will bring harm to us. Follow the white teachers, but keep all our laws. Your teachers need not know. They don't understand that for the black people these things are necessary. In these things is our well-being, our very life."

Lise Mulenga ran on ahead. After all, what mattered all these things? The earth was good, the forest warm and lovely, and far off, in that plain where a little lake shone like a jewel in its green setting, was the garden to which they were going, a rich, fertile garden that brought forth food in abundance. She and her mother were going to work there, and when she was hot and dusty there would be the cool shining water to bathe in.

It really was an enchanted land that morning, a land of living green, with cool winds making music in the tree-tops, and a flash of white wings against the

blue, blue sky. Lise and her mother reached the summit of a hill and looked down over a cluster of round roofs, which looked like sun-kissed mushrooms, away to the wide, sweet plain and the distant blue mountains, dreaming up into the peaceful sky—a land all sweet with the kiss of God. On they went, mostly in silence, Lise leading the way. On through the little village, almost deserted—for all the women were out at their gardens and the men out hunting and fishing—on again into the forest, alive with the drowsy hum of insects, and the fragrance of hidden flowers and blossoming trees.

Lise was singing to herself songs learnt at school, when, quite suddenly, she stopped and looked round at her mother.

" Did you hear that ? What cried ? "

" No, I heard nothing. Let us go on."

But the girl stood. " There it is again."

And this time the mother heard—a very faint little cry as from some frightened young animal. At any rate it was nothing to fear. They were going on when they heard it again.

" Let's see what it is," the girl said, and they began to hunt about among the bushes, using their hoes to push away the thick undergrowth.

" Mother, oh ! Mother, look. It is a child—is it dead ? "

The woman hastened to her daughter's side, and there, lying under a bush, was a little girl child, quite naked, covered with sores, a mere skeleton, hardly human. The woman drew back as if in fright, but Lise knelt and touched the child. It was alive, for it had cried. She made as if to lift it up, but the mother cried out, " Don't do that. We don't know what it is. Leave it alone, we'll ask in the village."

But Lise already had the small thing in her arms.

" I am going to take it back to the village ; perhaps it

"Three times it had died and come back to life, they said"

(*p.* 21)

has been lost for days. It isn't a little baby, it is a child who can walk."

She turned towards the village; the mother followed, talking loudly and scolding her daughter, begging her to leave the child.

In the village they found an old, old woman, almost blind. She leant on a stick, blinking at them.

"Isn't it dead yet?" she asked, when she saw the child. "It's a *chinkula* and has been in this village for many moons. It is cursed and won't die—it lives on to plague us."

She went on to tell them how, many moons ago, the parents, people of her clan, had brought to her the child, whose name was Musonda. They had been weak and would not kill it. The mother was a poor thing, lacking the courage and endurance of a true woman. They had asked her to look after the child, and hide from all the fact of its misfortune, and she really had tried to, but naturally ill-luck came to the village and the people found out. She had been willing to kill the child openly, but the head-man had been afraid of the white men who lived near. It might come to their ears and it would mean punishment for him—imprisonment for many months—and so he had told her just to let it die, and that is what she had done. She had let it sleep on the bare floor in the hut, she had let it crawl about and eat what it could, picking up rotten bits of food; it had had nothing but curses and blows, but it still persisted in living. Now at last it was dying—and what on earth did they mean by interfering and bringing the ill-begotten thing back to their village?

Lise listened, her eyes widening with horror, but her arms did not lessen their hold on the almost lifeless baby. Her mother and the old woman were scolding, threatening, almost cursing her, but she was thinking of

the Great Chief who had said, " It is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish." That Great Chief had conquered evil, and death too, and all the things of darkness, and she had promised to follow Him. She could not leave the little thing to die.

But suppose the white people really did not know, and that their Great Chief had no power over all the darkness, fear and evil in her land ? Then by keeping the baby she would bring harm on her own people. . . .

Her mother was saying, " But it is a strange child, not even of our own tribe."

That same Great Chief had said that they were to love and care for all people, even their enemies. Surely His power was stronger than all the power of evil in her land !

" I'll have her for my own, Mother, and the power of the Great Chief, Jesus, will protect us."

Nothing they could say altered Lise's decision. She carried the child back to her own village, a village where there was a Christian Mission and many Christian people. But even there Lise found the way a hard one ; the child was not wanted, Lise was hated for what she had done. Yet she held on her way, washed and attended to the little thing until it began to show signs of life.

When school opened, the Girls' School that Lise went to, she took the child and told her teachers the story.

" I can't come back to school without her, no one will care for her in the village. She'll die. Can't I bring her here ? "

The teachers wanted to say " Yes " at once, but they knew the decision must rest with the girls in the school. They told them the story. At first there was fear and hesitation, but after a time of thought, they came and said : " Yes, we'll have little Musonda here. We are not afraid."

All the parents were very angry. They came to the teachers and said, "We have given you our children, we have trusted you, and no harmful thing has befallen them yet, and now you run this awful risk for them, and bring into your midst this child of ill-luck. Look out now, we have warned you."

Musonda throve in the school. Lise was a real mother to her. At first the little neglected thing was more like an animal than a human child. She drew back and snarled if a hand was outstretched to touch her, she snatched at her food fearfully as if some one would take it from her. But little by little the memory of the old life was obliterated, and Musonda began to find this earth a joyous place to live in, and to know love, which is every child's heritage.

The missionaries reported the case to the British magistrate who lived about twenty-seven miles away, and he sent to their distant village for Mwila and Mwamba. Mwamba came—Mwila was not now his wife, he had cast her off. He no longer wanted the child, so he gave up all claim to her. The child was to be Lise's and the missionaries'.

One day a message came to the teacher, "Musonda's mother is here. Can she see her child?"

The teacher went out to find a woman with a baby on her back. As little Musonda came out through the school gate, the woman looked at her with unfathomable eyes. Was she thinking of the coming of her first-born? What was stirring in her heart? No one knew. She looked long at the child, touched her hand and turned to go. "I have seen her." She went off for a three or four weeks' journey through the forest to the village of her other husband, the father of the child she carried.

The years passed, and the day of Lise Mulenga's

marriage drew near. She had been engaged to a boy for two years. His name was Kambi Kambi, and long ago he had gone far south to work for a European. Lise had not seen him for years, she had no remembrance of him, but her parents and his parents were friends and wanted the marriage, and Lise had no reason to refuse : a good girl always obeys her parents. She had had many letters from him. She liked all that he said to her. She hoped that they would be able to live together in the new way, and not in bondage to the old.

When the boy came back to his village, he made Lise's heart glad by accepting little Musonda and saying that she should be his child too.

On her wedding morning Lise was dressed by her friends in the school and taken to the church, and there she and Kambi Kambi were married according to the new way. The little house in the village was decorated for them, and there was much rejoicing and feasting. But in the dawn the pot containing the power to guard their house from harm, and the pot of cleansing were handed in, and although Lise did not whole-heartedly think them necessary, she accepted them because she could not refuse the elders. Besides, her husband believed wholly in them, and would have been horrified had she spoken against them.

For a year Lise and Kambi Kambi lived happily in their own home, their joy increased by the coming of a baby girl, whom they called Priskilla. While she was still a very little baby thing, the father decided he must go back to his work again. He had a wife and child to clothe, and many in-laws, as well as his own relatives to keep. People were no longer content to wear bark-cloth, except in the villages far, far away in the forest, and even from some of these the young men were going off to the towns and mines for work. So

Kambi Kambi left his wife and baby, and went a long way south.

When Priskilla was about six months old, the young mother watched for the coming of the child's teeth. Her relief was great when she felt them pushing through from the lower gum, for some women had told her that the baby would be a *chinkula* because of Musonda. But when Priskilla, a healthy laughing baby, reached nine months, a dreadful illness fell upon her, and then the women began to whisper and say, " I told you so. The curse is working. It has come back upon your own child."

Poor Lise was almost insane with misery and anxiety.

" They say I've killed my baby, and they don't want me in the village," she said one day to her teacher. And so for some time she lived in the hospital with the suffering baby.

One night the teachers in the school were awakened by a loud crying. It was Lise. She had come from the hospital through the dark night.

" Mama, my baby is dying; let me take her to my own people in the village."

The teacher went to see; yes, the little thing lay very still, and so cold. Perhaps it was already dead.

" Let me carry her on my back for the last time," said the weeping mother. So they put the little child on her back, and she put a cloth over it, and tied it on and went off crying.

But next morning a message came that the baby had revived, come back from the dead. Three times it had died and come back to life, they said.

Then began a long, slow struggle, so slow that Lise felt that the Great Chief had left her and her baby, and one day she prayed, " O Chief, I beg you not to keep passing by my little house in which I sit with my baby.

Come in and take her, if so Thou wilt. I will give her. Or heal her, if so Thou wilt, but do not just pass us by any longer."

The people said, "Where is your Chief? Look at your suffering child. Remember all we said to you when you brought the child of ill luck into our midst."

No one thought the babe could live. The struggle was a heart-breaking one, but slowly, so desperately slowly, the baby turned towards life, always needing care. Meanwhile, the father, in his far-off place of work, had heard of his baby's illness. He longed to get back but could not. His master would not let him come. Lise had to bear all the anxiety alone, knowing that her baby's death might mean an end of her husband's desire for her. He would think that some wrong she had done had caused the trouble.

She took up her daily duties again; there was garden work, and her little house to care for. Some day her husband would return. Would he find her still desirable, or would some other woman have won him from her in that far-off place? She was willing to go to the strange, distant land should he call her. She and her delicate little Priskilla would go together. It was hard to live without a husband. If Kambi Kambi did not come back, and if he did not send for them, Lise supposed she must marry someone else—even be the second wife of the man who had already spoken to her mother. Perhaps, after all, it *was* true that the way of the Great Chief was for the white man only. How can a woman follow Him if her husband leaves her alone?

A year later, one hot day in May, Lise was weeding in the gardens. Priskilla, not yet walking, was now sturdy enough to sit up and crawl about: she was sitting under a cassava bush pulling off the leaves.

Women were at work in all the gardens round about, and in the intervals, when they drew themselves up to relieve their tired backs, they discussed the state of the gardens. Thick coarse grass was waist-high in many of them; lions had been so troublesome the previous month that the women had not dared to leave the village and all the gardens had been neglected.

Lise worked on, occasionally shouting a reply to some question asked or remark passed by a woman a little distance away. Her mind was upon her garden: how many new cassava beds she would need to have dug next rains, who would dig for her? For the first digging was the husband's work, it was too hard for the woman. So engrossed was she, she did not notice that the other women had stopped work and were gathering round a girl who had come running from the village.

"Napriskilla! They want you, they have come back!"

Lise drew herself up. "What is it? Who is wanting me?" She looked at the little group and began to tie around her the cloth in which she was dressed.

"It's the father of Priskilla, he's come back!"

A half incredulous joy lit up the girl's face. "No, really? You are not lying to me, are you?"

"No—it's true, hurry up and go."

She rushed to her baby, she picked her up by one arm, and tossed her over on to her back. A dozen hands were ready with the cloth that tied on the child. Lise bent while they arranged it and then tied the ends securely on her chest. She picked up her hoe and went off. The women stood watching and talking excitedly. Lise ran up the hill, turning her head every now and then to say to Priskilla, "Your father has come, he has come back to us."

She crossed a stream and stopped to wash her hot face and neck and earth-soiled hands. She slung the

baby round and washed her. Now her steps grew slower, the village was near, she saw the group around her house. Would her husband welcome her? Would he like her again? Had he taken another wife? Would he be vexed because Priskilla was not yet walking? These and other questions passed through her mind.

She went up to the waiting people. Her father said, "Here's your wife and child."

Lise knelt and clapped. "You have come, Mukwai!"[1] She raised her eyes and saw him coming towards her—Kambi Kambi her husband, Priskilla's father, dressed in European clothes, a very rich looking man. He took her hand. "I have come." It seemed to satisfy her for she undid her cloth, and drew Priskilla round. "Here is your child." Priskilla was in her happiest mood, she chuckled and held out her hands to him. A smile broke over the father's face. He took her, fondled her, and at last said, "I expected to find her very thin—but she is a strong, fat child."

The little group were talking all the time, relating the news of the past three years. Later on they dispersed and the two were left alone. Kambi Kambi sat down on a deck chair made of skin which his father-in-law had brought out for him. Lise sat on a mat just in front of the doorway. Priskilla was asleep in her father's arms.

"I'm sorry I've been away so long," he said, and he went on to tell her of his life in the far south. "I have promised my master to go back in three months."

Lise looked up, "You will leave us again?"

"No, I shall take you and Priskilla. I now have a house down there." Lise's heart leapt up and she said with deep content: "I will follow you, Mukwai."

[1] A term of respect, used instead of a name. An African wife does not often use her husband's name.

Sometime later a group gathered round that same house again. This time it was to say good-bye. Kambi Kambi stood ready for the road, bundles tied everywhere on his bicycle. Lise, with Priskilla on her back, was to go on ahead, her husband would soon overtake her. She, with a little group of friends and relatives, was climbing the hill. She turned round and called out to Kambi Kambi, "Don't forget to go and say good-bye to the Ba Mama[1] in the school. I am going there now."

At last all the good-byes were over, and she was alone on the road. Before her it was all unknown—a journey by river, and motor-car and train, things she had never seen, and then a town where many Europeans lived, where there were many stores, and all kinds of unknown things. But there was a house there for her and her husband and little Priskilla—and a mission near, she was glad of that.

A song came to her lips, and a bell rang behind—it was Kambi Kambi. "Are you all right?" he asked. "Yes," was the cheerful answer. "Then I'll go on to the next village and ask for food. You'll find it waiting when you arrive."

Lise moved Priskilla to a more comfortable position, and as the little thing smiled and talked in her own baby fashion Lise suddenly put her face to hers and said, "My Priskilla. God has indeed taken care of us—He is good."

And on she went to the new life, singing.

[1] Literally the grandmothers—used of the missionaries in the school.

THE MASTER'S COLLEGE
SANTA CLARITA, CA 91321

Chapter III—CANDLE LIGHTS

Of Lise Mulenga's Journey, and Some Memories

Over at last! Lise had not enjoyed it very much, her first journey in the train, two nights and a day of it. Priskilla had cried, there was no room to lay her down, the long, curious compartment in which they travelled had been full of all kinds of people, the strange languages had frightened Lise. And then she had been desperately hungry, so had Priskilla. For the first time in her life Lise had not had the daily meal of *bwali*.[1] She had had to eat bread, the food of the white people, and she did not like it at all, it was so dry she could scarcely swallow it. It had been easier when her husband brought her some water; he had climbed down when the train halted near a river and told her to soak the bread in water and try Priskilla with it. Priskilla had eaten a little of it, but she did not like it at all. And then it was so hot; the men stood round the windows all the time and the fresh air could not get in. Lise, sitting on the crowded floor, felt ill. Her husband told her of some great waterfall they were passing, he wanted her to see it and tried to force a way for her to the window. She caught one tiny glimpse and shut her eyes in terror—the train seemed to be going through the air, they had left the earth far below. She shrieked, so did some of the other women, and the babies cried. Afterwards her husband told her that the train had crossed a bridge high up above the falls, and Lise remembered learning of these

[1] A thick, stiff porridge usually made from cassava flour.

same wonderful falls in school; they were named after the great English queen, Victoria.

But now it was over: they were at Masampa, the place where her husband worked. It was like a new world. Here there were no little villages, and the forest seemed very far away, it could not be seen. There was nothing but houses and people, trains and motor-cars, and strange noises all the time. Their house was one of many in a great compound, far too many for Lise to count, hundreds of them, all the same kind. It was a little round brick house, with a proper door and window, and very clean; Lise liked it. In that great compound there were people from all tribes, some of them very wild and savage-looking. But Lise was fortunate, for in the house next to hers there was a woman from Kasembe's village, only seven miles from Mbereshi. How they talked that first day! Lise learnt much about compound life, and in her turn answered question after question asked by the home-sick woman.

It was a strange life. Kambi Kambi went off to his work in the morning; Lise swept her little house, went to the strange thing called a pump to get water, washed herself and Priskilla, and then sat idle, or wandered about the compound. She longed for her garden, for the cool flowing river, for her friends, and often cried with home-sickness. Later on in the morning she cheered up; there was something to do, she had to go to the compound store for flour and meat, and then she could prepare the food and satisfy her own hunger. Her husband came back for his food at twelve o'clock, but she had hers long before that. Then there was the long afternoon. Often she went to sleep, sometimes she would leave the compound and go to the big stores in the town to look at the pretty cloths and the fine basins and saucepans. But she was afraid of the town, afraid of being caught

and put into prison for breaking some law of the township. The evenings were better. Her husband came home, there was another meal, and although he often went out again to play with his friends, Lise loved sitting on a little stool near her house, watching the life of the compound. Often there was dancing; there was much singing. Sometimes there was fighting, and always a great deal of beer-drinking.

Lise had discovered a few more women who spoke her own language, and one night a week they all came to her house, where they sang hymns and had a little time of prayer. It was Tuesday night, and she always longed for it to come, because on that night in the far-away beloved home village the girls in the school gathered to remember all their friends. Then her name was never forgotten; she knew that. Somehow Mbereshi seemed near on Tuesday nights.

Occasionally Lise's husband gave her a little money: then she went to the stores and bought cloth and made a little dress for Priskilla and one for herself. She was happy then, for she had something to do.

On Sundays she went to the little mission church on the far side of the compound. She didn't understand much, the service was in a strange tongue, but she liked to be there. She sometimes discovered friends from her own country, and she at once told them of Tuesday evening's gathering.

Her husband was not much with her, but he was always kind. She wondered where he was during the long evenings, and sometimes she longed for him, for strange men came and tempted her, and then she had to go to her friend's house for refuge.

One Sunday, as she sat in the mission church, she decided that she could not live there any longer. She must go home, home called to her—the old food, the

gardens, the forest, her own people, she longed for these things. And she was afraid of one man, he came so often, and her husband was beginning to be suspicious, they had had their first bad quarrel the day before ; he had beaten her and she had used bad language. That morning she had refused to cook his food. She was so engrossed with her own thoughts that she didn't look at the people as she usually did. During the last hymn she tied Priskilla firmly on her back and made for the door, she wanted to get out first.

Where should she go ? If she went home her husband might beat her. The thought of that other man came, he had promised her so much—clothes, basins, not only for herself, but for her mother, and he had promised to take her home ! Surely it was not wrong if her husband did not want her and this man did ?

Someone caught her arm, " Lise ! "

She turned sharply, and her face changed, she was a happy girl again. " Chishimba ! " Yes, Chishimba, who had been at school with her. They fell upon one another, and many of the people coming from church paused to watch their rapturous joy.

" I came yesterday. My husband is working for the missionary. Come to our house, it is in the mission compound."

They went off hand in hand and soon came to Chishimba's house, one very much like Lise's only a little bigger. Chishimba's husband, Musunga, came to say how glad he was to see Lise, and to ask where her husband was. Lise told him she had left him in the house. She had forgotten all her troubles in meeting Chishimba. While Musunga went off to find Kambi Kambi the two girls talked. Chishimba had come from Mbereshi, she could give Lise news of every one. It was as if home itself had come to the girl's desolate heart.

When Chishimba began to ask her about her life in the compound, Lise told her everything—her homesickness, the long empty days, the wild nights, her husband's long absences, that other man, the quarrel of yesterday, and her angry parting with her husband that morning: she hid nothing. Chishimba did not say much: "We'll help one another now, Lise, and my husband will help yours, and peace will come back again. Now come in and help me prepare the food."

Soon the two girls were busy over the fire. Chishimba had everything beautifully clean. Lise felt a little ashamed, for she had lost interest in her house; the pots were often unwashed, that was one of the things her husband had against her. Priskilla sat on a stool playing with some beads Chishimba had given her, and Lise heard her call out "*Tata*." She looked out and saw her husband coming, dressed in all his best clothes. Musunga had brought him. He really did look rather nice. All the anger died from her heart, she went out and greeted him and then called to Chishimba to come and see him.

The two husbands sat outside the house while their wives finished their tasks. The meal was put on a little table and then Chishimba went out and asked them to come in and eat. There was *bwali* made of rice, and nicely stewed meat. Lise marvelled at the way Chishimba did it all. The two girls then went outside and sat on a mat with small basins of food before them.

When the meal was over they sat talking until the bell called them to church again. Kambi Kambi went with them, it was the first time for many weeks that he had gone to church.

It seemed like a new world to Lise as she sat by Chishimba's side. She tried to sing the strange words, she lifted up her heart in thanksgiving.

During the sermon, in a language of which she could understand nothing, Chishimba was thinking of Lise's story. Then as her eyes lighted on her husband, she felt proud. She could trust him, had he not proved true and faithful? They had been married for a few weeks only, and theirs had been a marriage such as few boys and girls have in their country. She lived the story once more in imagination.

* * * * * *

Long before Musunga had come to claim his bride, it was rumoured that these two young people meant to break away from some of the old marriage customs. Chipepa, one of Chishimba's school friends, had heard it, and on the night before the wedding she said to Chishimba, "Is it true, are you really going to refuse to do all that the old people tell you?"

"Yes," she had answered, serenely and quietly, "my betrothed and I want our marriage to be clean. We want nothing but the power and blessing of the Great Chief upon our house, and because of this we are going to be married here at Mbereshi instead of at our home. Our parents are chiefs, as you know, and if we go home they will insist upon our following all the old, bad customs. We haven't told them even; afterwards we shall go home."

Then the prayer bell had rung, and together they went into school, for it was the night when all the old girls came for their weekly prayer service.

It was a quiet little service that night, there seemed much on the girls' hearts. There was news of girls far away: Ila Semba in Elisabethville in the Congo—she and her husband and little child had once been so happy, their home had been a centre for the Christians, but now there was trouble. It began with the death of the second baby, a little thing of a fortnight old. Ila's

mother and brother told her the child died because her husband had been unfaithful to her. She didn't want to believe it, but they so insisted that in the end it broke her faith in her husband. She grew suspicious and peace left their house, and now she talked of leaving him.

There was good news of Chileshye—she and her little son had gone to her husband at Elisabethville.

Lise Mulenga had gone to Masampa with her husband ; they must remember her and little Priskilla in the strangeness of the life there.

There was sad news from Neli Musonda away south on the railway line with Mulenga, her husband. A little baby girl had come to bless them, but only for a few days. Neli and Mulenga had such real love for each other and were blessed with good Christian parents—there was little fear that the baby's death would cause suspicion and dispeace there.

And Chishimba, their friend, to be married to-morrow —to be married in a really new way, without any of the old customs. They wanted to pray for her.

Indeed, there were many things on their hearts that night, and prayer came readily and fearlessly, for was not the Great Chief always near to hear ?

" O Thou Great Chief, light a candle within my heart, that I may see what is therein and sweep the rubbish from Thy dwelling-place," Chishimba had prayed, thinking of all that was before her on the morrow and through all the days of her married life. And there were others who desired that ever-flaming candle light to lighten the darkness around them.

As soon as they were in the yard again, the chattering and laughter returned. Mothers had to find their babies and show the teachers how they had grown in one week, and babies had to be taught how to shake hands.

Their first baby

Mupelwa's twins cried lustily, they strongly objected to all the fuss. At last all the good-byes were over, the last words of good wishes for the morrow were thrown back over the wall to Chishimba.

The wedding day dawned sweet and clear and golden, as all days do in Africa. All morning Chishimba worked in school and in the house, as she had done on every other morning of her school life. Then her friends dressed her in her white and gold wedding frock, and tied a white handkerchief on her head becomingly. They found some white lilies in the forest for her to carry. At two o'clock the whole school, clean and happy, went with Chishimba to the church, singing as they went.

Musunga, the bridegroom, was there with his young men friends. They all looked very grand, most of them in European clothes. Musunga's eyes sought his bride's. There was one shy yet fearless look, and he took her hand as they stood together to make their promises to the Great Chief. Chishimba spoke in a clear voice all could hear. She spoke as if in triumph, and there was a light and hope and earnestness on the faces of both that had seldom before been seen on the faces of a boy and girl at their wedding.

They went from the church to the village. A grass fence had been built round the little house that was to be theirs for the few days they remained there, and only their own friends were to be allowed in. Old women tried to push in.

" We must instruct the bride—let us come."

" No," they were told firmly, " the bride has been instructed by her teacher. She does not need you."

The old women were very angry indeed, and so were many of the old men. " This is no marriage at all," they said. " Only ill fortune can come of it."

Two women forced their way into the little room

where the bride was sitting with her friends. She rose up. " My mothers, I know you think you can help me, but I do not need the things you want to give. My teacher has told me how a Christian bride and wife should live, and for our protection we have the power of the Great Chief within our hearts and on our house. We need none but Him."

They told her she was a fool ; they cursed her, but Chishimba was unmoved. Next morning they tried to bring her their pots, but husband and wife stood together on the threshold of the little house, and said :

" We are cleansed by the Life of the Great Chief given for us. We need no other cleansing."

A few days later they set off to their distant home, a five days' journey through forest. When they came to the great plain, they saw their village far off on the other side amongst the trees. They could see the faint smoke haze. It was not long before they could see people coming out to meet them, and the far-off throbbing sound of the drums came to their ears. They smiled joyously at each other. " They are not angry with us, they are welcoming us with joy."

Little children singing, women dancing, the old men clapping and stamping, all came. What a welcome it was ! They had not dreamed of this. An ox had been killed. There was feasting such as the village had never before known.

That night, when the shouting and the drumming and the dancing had died down, and glittering starlight filled the wide plain, Chishimba and Musunga sat with their fathers round a blazing fire. One old man lifted his head and looked long at them, these two children of his blood, children of a long line of chiefs, but children of a New Way. In his eyes there was a deep content.

" My children, I bless you. Your eyes have seen

new things, your ears have heard new words. Follow, be strong, endure, bear strong children to lift our people up and bear them on."

And blessing them again, he left them. And silence came, and the stars shone in the African sky, like a million little candle lights; and the boy and girl went hand in hand into the little house, and knelt before their Chief.

* * * * * *

"Follow—be strong—endure." . . . Chishimba was recalled from her reverie. It was going to be a hard life there in that strange town. Lise's story revealed that. But Chishimba had decided that she would not let her days slip aimlessly away. Coming from church she spoke of it to Musunga, and he suggested she should speak to the missionary, at that very moment crossing from the church to his house.

"Come with me, Lise," Chishimba said. So the two girls went together.

The missionary listened sympathetically to what the girls had to say. They touched upon the problem that was always before him, that of the young women in the compounds and native locations, all of them women from agricultural tribes whose lives had been lived in the gardens, and who, coming to the towns, were bereft of their occupation, and had no means of employing themselves during the day.

Here were two girls anxious for something to do, the missionary would make use of them. And so little reading groups were organized, and Lise and Chishimba soon became well known and made many friends. The meeting at Lise's house on Tuesday nights was revived, and more and more came until the little house couldn't hold them.

Lise found she could help in other ways also. She

had learnt so much through Priskilla's illness that women sometimes came to her with their sick babies.

Kambi Kambi and Musunga became great friends. If her husband was out at nights now, Lise was often with him, for it was to Musunga's house they went.

One day Chishimba came with a letter to Lise's house. " Here's a letter from Chungu in the school. She tells of a new hospital they are going to have, and it's to be called ' The House of Life.' It's for women and babies, and a new Mama Doctor is coming from *Bulaya*.[1] All the girls are going to be taught how to care for babies and little children in new, good ways, so that they'll know what to do in sickness. And some of the girls who are married and living in Mbereshi are to be taught *buchimbusa*." [2]

Lise listened with keen interest. " When I go back I shall learn ; my husband says he will let me go home for three months next year. If I tell him I want to learn in the new hospital he may let me stay longer. Then I shall come back able to help him and earn money to have our children educated. It's very good news you bring, my friend."

" Yes," said Chishimba, " I told the missionary, and he said that if such Welfare Centres could be put in big compounds like this, it would help the women more than anything else. I'm going to the stores this morning, will you come with me ? "

" I can come now. Come on, Priskilla," and Priskilla came, a sturdy, toddling little girl. Off they went together, still talking of the Welfare Centre and what it would mean to them all.

[1] The land across the water. [2] Midwifery.

WESTBRAE BIBLE
CHURCH 1343 HOPKINS ST.

Chapter IV—FLICKERING CANDLES

Of a School, and Chungu

Drumming, singing, clapping, dancing everywhere; the night was full of it, from the yard of the Girls' School down to the far away, wet, shining sand of the ferry. All through the village, in every part of it, boys and girls were playing. For the moon was high, its white radiance fell over all the land, silvering rivers and lakes, turning the thatches of the houses into soft, grey velvet, revealing colours softened, the colours of dreams. The moonlight ever calls to the African, old and young. It is his playtime, it stirs his blood. The earth and all its wild joy calls to him, songs rise to his lips and his feet are restless for the dance. The drums throb with an ever more intoxicating passion, until all restraint is thrown away, and the shadow of evil falls over the stillness of the night.

But it was only the young people dancing that night; groups of youths with their drums, danced and sang. And in other parts of the village, out of the boys' sight, girls danced and sang also. Everywhere little frolicking groups of tireless children danced with swift, stamping, rhythmic steps and swaying bodies; shrill voices singing, and little hands clapping; life, movement, song, everywhere.

The elders sat looking on, sometimes laughing at the antics of the children, or talking to their friends, but often silent, for the moonlight stirs dreams within one. They saw the long-ago days of their youth, felt faintly

the stirring of the old desire for the wildness of the dance —they lived through its madness and passion, saw the big *nsupa* (gourds) foaming with beer, heard the wild throbbing of the drums and the ever intoxicating rhythm of the dancers' feet. They saw in the lithe swaying bodies of their boys and girls now dancing before them, the straining towards the old wildness—how some were near to losing all restraint as the drumming got swifter and wilder. But there were those in their midst, their own pioneers in a new way, to check and constrain, with power to forbid the dance, should it become too wild.

There was Chungu over there with a host of girls about her. She had just stopped one dance.

" No, I don't like this," she had said, " let's stop it. If we can't play cleanly, don't let us play at all. Play is a good thing, God gives it to us, don't let us spoil His gift. Look here, I'll teach you one of the dances they do in the school. Sit down, and I'll teach you now to sing it."

They all sat down around her, and Chungu began to sing the tune of an English country dance, one called *Peascods*, and soon all were joining in, clapping their hands in time. Then she taught them the steps, and soon all were dancing with as much vigour as they put into their own dances. True, an English girl might not have recognized the dance had she seen it, but she would have thought it a very jolly one, and longed to join in !

Some girls who had been dancing elsewhere came to her. " Mukwai, our friends want us to dance *mbeni*. Is it a good dance ? "

Chungu thought for a moment.

" I'm not sure. Let us see what the elders say."

She went up to a group of elderly women.

" My mothers," she said, kneeling before them, " do you think *mbeni* is a good dance ? "

They all began to talk at once, for there is nothing an African loves more than an argument. In the end judgment was given against it, and the girl went back, saying: " They refuse. Let's choose another."

Two men walked by, both of them heads of *fitente*.[1] They saw Chungu playing with a lot of little girls.

" She is a foolish woman. No man will want a woman who plays so much. It is a long time now since she and her husband parted, and still she remains unmarried. It's her own fault, she is always playing with the children. I'm sorry for her parents. It is a disgrace to them to have an unmarried daughter."

The women, sitting over a little fire of sticks, were talking of her also, most of them criticizing her; one or two were a little uncertain. Nalise was there, but she had taken no part in the discussion. She was thinking of her daughter and little Priskilla—they had been gone a long time now. One of the other women appealed to her, and asked her what she thought of Chungu's behaviour. Nalise remembered Chungu's kindness to them all when little Priskilla was so ill, and reminded them that there were not so many bad dances danced by the girls now, and that the little children loved her. She taught them games and songs and carols at *Chaka* (Christmas) time. Was it not Chungu who taught them drills and songs and dances to welcome the missionaries when they came back from *Bulaya*? But then a woman should have no interest outside her house and her garden. No man liked a woman who at any time would go off and play with girls and children. She was divorced, and therefore should be doing her best to win another man.

Meanwhile, Chungu, unconscious of all the talk, played on with the children. She was a short, thick, heavy

[1] Divisions of the village for purposes of government.

girl of about twenty-one. Her feet were enormous—sometimes they called her duck-footed, but now she could laugh at that, for what did it matter after all? It was Chungu's face one looked at, not her feet. A quiet, gentle face, the face of one who had known sorrow and shame, it was often very sad. To-night it was alight with eagerness and smiles, for the children wanted her. Her own little girl, Betty, was one of them.

When the Girls' School on the top of the hill had first opened, Chungu had been one of the first four pupils. What wild, naughty little things they had been, tormenting, teasing and frightening their teacher who was fresh from England, knowing nothing of them, speaking their language but falteringly! Chungu had been betrothed to Namwelyu before she went to school. Of course, she had not refused—she had not dreamed of refusing. After three years in school she had been married with great rejoicing. Namwelyu was a Christian boy, and she too had been baptized just before her marriage. She had been so sure that their house would be blessed and that she would be a good wife. But Namwelyu often scolded her; she resented it; they quarrelled; he beat her and she swore at him, using all the awful language she knew, which was considerable; she even bit him. The old people often came and talked gently to them, telling them that this quarrelling was bad. They told Chungu that in the old days a woman who used such language as she did would have had her lips cut off by the chief. She knew that this was true, for one of her aunts had been so punished, and a woman not far from her house had had her tongue cut out.

The men talked to Namwelyu, and told him he ought to treat his young wife more gently, but he turned away impatiently. "She's hard. I can do nothing with her. If she won't obey me, I shall beat her."

Sometimes Chungu was sorry and would try desperately hard, but Namwelyu always seemed to find fault, and then her anger blazed forth, and all was as bad as ever.

They said to Namwelyu, "Remember she is a girl, and she is going to bear you a little child. A woman is often difficult then. Be patient with her, it will be all right when the baby comes." And Namwelyu tried to be patient, and then Chungu became obedient and gentle.

There was real joy with the coming of little Betty, but it did not last long. The quarrelling began again, and was as fierce as ever. Then Namwelyu went away to find work, and he asked the teacher in the school if she would have Chungu and Betty there. He did not like leaving them in the village alone; they would be protected in the school. It was agreed that Chungu should come back as a teacher and have little Betty with her.

Chungu was quite pleased, for there was a new school now —it was not the one long dark dormitory and yard of her day. Now it was a real village—not quite like an ordinary one, for the schoolhouses were square and made of bricks, and they had tiled roofs. There was a big wall enclosing all. There were nine of these little houses, which, with a house for the teachers, were set five on one side of the big compound, and five on the other. In the centre was a large *nsaka*,[1] just the kind they had in their own villages, a place to sit in and play in, and eat in on wet days. The missionaries' house was at one end of the compound and opposite, at the far end, were the schoolroom, classrooms and kitchen. It was all quite as big as a small village, and

[1] A circular grass thatch supported on poles to give shelter from rain and sun. It is the meeting-place of the village and usually in the centre.

like their villages in many ways. In each house was a "family"; the head of it was the house-mother, and her assistant was called the aunt. These were always two big girls who had proved themselves worthy of a position of trust, and capable of looking after the ten children in their house. The house-mothers and aunts were called the *bakalamba*,[1] and they, together with the teachers and the missionaries, governed the school village. The girls did all the work of the village and they also had their gardens.

Chungu liked the life there enormously, for not only was there teaching in the school, but it was her duty to go with the girls to the gardens, and to the forest for firewood; to go with them mushroom gathering when the mushroom month came round, and for caterpillars at the end of the dry season when the trees were covered with the big green caterpillars they found so good to eat; to show them how to mud the floors of their houses and cook their food; to help them make pots as they made them in the villages. And with all this there were dancing and singing and games of all kinds.

For two years Chungu lived and worked in the Girls' Village, finding life good.

One night, long after all the girls were in bed, a message came that Namwelyu had returned and was very angry indeed.

He took Chungu and little Betty to the village, and next morning he came back to the school. He had with him a packet of letters. He had found them in the house of some boys in Elisabethville. They were written by his wife, and many sad and shameful things were written in them. While Chungu had been working so splendidly in school, she had been writing these letters and sending them secretly. Namwelyu was very angry

[1] The elders of the village, heads of *fitente*.

indeed. " I don't know whether I shall forgive her or not." He was very self-righteous about it. But what secrets were hidden in those two years he had been away from his wife ? The teacher knew that he too must have met dreadful temptations and not always have withstood them. But he would not think of this. " I've caught my wife in sin," he said.

Weeks went by and Namwelyu took the matter to the elders of the village and the church. It was thought that Chungu ought to be suspended from church membership for a time, but an old man rose up, in all the dignity of Christian tenderness, and said :

" My friends, she is a girl. She wrote those letters in the foolishness of a girl's heart. She did no actual sin, and who amongst us has pure thoughts and pure desires always ? When have we before seen such penitence as this child shows ? Have you seen her ? Her body has fallen away, she is thin with her crying. Let her confess her sin, and let us receive her as our Chief received the woman of long ago who sinned. Would He forbid Chungu with her tears to come to His table ? "

There was silence. No one could answer him.

A little before this Chungu's mother had come to school in great trouble. Chungu would not eat, was so thin, she cried in the night. Couldn't the Mama help her ? The Mama had been hoping and praying that Chungu would come to her. She had come once with Namwelyu, and had sat hard and still, refusing to speak. That was weeks ago, and since then she had not been near. The Mama had sent a message asking Chungu to come, and that night, after dark, she came. Not the old fat, happy Chungu, but a mere shadow of her, a thin girl with eyes big and weary with crying. She had no words, only tears, heart-breaking tears, and after a long sobbing silence, all she could say was : " Mama, I have brought

shame to you and to the Great Chief;" and then again the dreadful sobbing.

On next Communion Sunday, Chungu stood up, and in a clear, though unsteady voice, she made her confession. There were tears in many eyes, and some in that big congregation were led by that grief-stricken child to realize as never before the shame of their own sinfulness. At the end of the service the old deacon who had pleaded for her went to her with his hand outstretched, and the women crowded round as if they wanted to make her know how gladly they received her.

But that was not the end for Chungu. There was more bitter struggling and failure. Namwelyu took her back as his wife, but he could never forgive her, always he taunted her. He would find her sitting reading the New Testament with some old woman, and he would say, "What can a bad woman teach you? Listen to what she did." And he would tell them all.

Then the old anger flamed up in her, and in their house there was no peace. At last they both went to the chief and to the Government office to get a divorce. Namwelyu had already chosen another wife; he had been visiting her for some time, and so Chungu agreed, and they were divorced.

She lived for three years a quiet, helpful life in her village, winning back the respect of the people. She redeemed the past, and then came back to school again as a teacher, her little Betty as a schoolgirl. She had not been back at school for very long when the church elected her to a position of trust and honour. It gave Chungu a new thought of life, and when proposals of marriage came from men in Elisabethville, she had one answer, "I am caught in the net of the Great Chief."

In school she took her place with Mwenya, the matron who had been there since the school's beginning. She

was respected and feared by all, and her influence became a big factor in the lives of the elder girls.

Kabwe, her cousin, was a teacher in the school, a tall beautiful girl of eighteen, so were Nsama and Mubanga and Kauma, all girls over eighteen, unmarried. This had never been in their country before. The girls were married at thirteen or fourteen as a protection. It was thought to be an impossibility for an unmarried girl to live a good life in any village, and these girls themselves knew that if they were in their villages they might not have strength to withstand the force of temptation.

Even in the school it was desperately hard at times. Kabwe had had letters from a boy who had married one of her school friends, Chishimba's sister, and he had begged her to write to him and to be his wife when she came home for holidays. Kabwe had been flattered, for he was a boy of much wealth and learning, and had hidden the letters, not telling her parents or her teacher. But something had kept her from replying, and when a girl, who wanted to harm her in the eyes of her teacher, took the letters from her box and dropped them in the teacher's bedroom that she might see, Kabwe was glad in her heart of hearts. Her parents were angry with her for not taking the letters to them, and her teacher was grieved. She vowed in her heart she would never again receive letters from any boy. But it was difficult—boys would write and send her gifts and sometimes she wanted to keep them. If only she were betrothed they would not tempt her, they would be afraid. And then, so many of her friends at home were married, and some had little babies. She was often restless and impatient, not quite knowing why, and she grew tired of teaching and of the school life.

At last her parents agreed to one boy who wrote to her. Kabwe, though not knowing him well, accepted him

because of the satisfaction of being betrothed, and of the protection it would give her. She hoped that during the year of waiting they would get to know one another through letters, for the boy was a clerk in the Government office at Livingstone, hundreds of miles away.

And now Nsama, her great friend, was also betrothed. She, too, had found the way hard. A rich man had wanted her, an Arab with several dhows and stores by Lake Tanganyika. He had had four wives and divorced them all for unfaithfulness. He had eight children. He had become a Christian, and wanted a young Christian wife whom he could train in ways of meekness and obedience. Nsama's parents were delighted. They ignored the difference in age—Nsama, a girl of sixteen; he a man of forty-five! Nsama herself shrank from it; she owned frankly to her teacher, "I may like it now, but when the years pass he will be old, I shall be young, and I shall want a young husband." His wealth appealed to her, she would be able to wear many clothes, eat much good food. However, she had courage to hold out against it, but it was hard for her.

Then Nsama became betrothed to a boy in the Congo, and for some time she was happy. But rumours of how he was continually drinking came through to her. She wrote, begging him to stop, and he wrote back in anger, saying, "What man would be guided by a woman?"

More and more stories came, and she decided she could not marry him. The people began to talk of her, a girl who had promised two men and then had gone back on her word must be useless. And she began to fear no one else would want her. She got restless and difficult, lost interest in the work, and people began to say she was a rude, bold girl.

But joy and content came to her again. A boy working on a mission station far away had seen her once and

had desired her ever since. It pleased her parents and her teachers, for they knew him to be a good, steady boy. Nsama rejoiced; now she need not fear all that the people said. She would try to remember how carefully an unmarried girl is watched, and keep herself from all suspicion of evil. It would be hard for her, for there is so much jealousy and lying in her country, and she and all her girl friends had to learn to endure hard things, to suffer hate and evil, jealousy and suspicion, if they set out to follow the way of the Great Chief.

There Chungu could show them the way. Many evil things were said of her. She endured them all. And now she was looked upon as one of the leaders of the women and girls, and she unmarried too. So good does triumph. Nsama and her friends knew that Chungu had triumphed because she had conquered that pride which is so strong in the heart of every African boy and girl, a pride which resents all criticism and refuses to own any wrong, a pride which blazes into passionate anger when any one says a word against one's personal character or appearance, a pride which causes hatred and won't forgive.

Chungu had known her sin, seen it as a dreadful thing, and now she had gone on ahead of them on the great highway of Love. They all knew it, and in their hearts they desired to follow—but the way was hard, and so many things held them back. It was denying oneself all the way. Sometimes they almost wished they could leave it all and give themselves altogether to the old things. But their eyes had seen a new way, and it beckoned; although they might turn from it again and again, yet in the end it would claim them. They could never again be as they had been.

Chapter V—STARS IN THE NIGHT

Of some Ups and Downs in School, and a Great Vision

What! morning already! Chungu stretched sleepily and yawned loudly, and removing the blanket that all night long had covered her head, looked round. It was still quite dark, but it must be dawn, for the bell was clanging gaily. There was a stir in all the little houses, the sounds of doors and windows opening—much yawning and stretching and then voices.

Mayo Mwenya opened the wooden shutter to let in the light. The other teachers were still asleep, their heads muffled in blankets.

"Mariya, Kabwe, wake up, don't you hear the bell?"

Sleepy faces appeared and one by one the girls sat up. "The bucket's mine," said Agnes, suddenly leaping from the bed and seizing it. Kabwe followed suit: "Mine the basin," and she made a grab at it. But Mariya had it first and bolted out to join the girls and children going out through the gate to the washing place just across the stream at the back of the school.

Heads, arms, legs to be washed in the morning, so ran the rule of the school. Many had already washed, some were combing their hair with long wooden combs, several were rubbing their feet on a piece of rock placed there for that purpose. The only little bit of white on them, that at the soles of their feet, was kept most scrupulously clean, it was the bit of their bodies they paid most attention to at washing time.

Mary Mutengo, still combing hair, called out "Number

"Chungu and her little Betty as a schoolgirl"

(*p.* 44)

Seven house! Come here all of you—I'm going to see you are clean this morning—they scolded me yesterday because one of you hadn't washed." Dripping children made their way towards her, wiping water from their heads and faces with their hands. "You'll do," said their house-mother, counting them, "don't you ever bring shame on me again." Some of them were now going back into the school compound, cleaning their teeth with a little bit of wood picked from a large bush. The operation over, the "tooth-brush" was thrown away.

Meanwhile, Kabwe and Mariya were rubbing their feet on the stone in silence. Neither looked very happy. Again the bell began to ring, and the children ran towards the school. Suddenly Mariya burst out: "I'm not going to pray this morning, my heart is still angry. It's no good praying if you don't feel like it—it would be a lie." Kabwe hesitated and then went, saying, "I suppose I'd better go."

The children filed into prayers, and Mariya, outside, rubbed her feet vigorously. The school would be a good place if it were not for the big girls, they made it hard. They were jealous of the teachers, that was it. Mariya stood up, the expression on her face as black as her skin. Last night for no reason at all someone had said, "You're no better than we are. You are only here as a teacher because of the money you are paid." A fine quarrel had ensued, and it had spread until all the big girls had been involved in it and all the teachers too.

"They hate me, and tell lies about me," she said to herself. "I won't stay here, it's a bad place—the Ba Mama don't know how wicked the girls are." She picked up her tooth-brush and set to work with it, nursing her anger all the time.

The sound of voices disturbed her. They were coming out of prayers, she supposed she ought to go and do her

work. She went into the yard scowling. Most of the elder girls had gone to their work in the big house. Chungu was in the kitchen making butter, and seeing Mariya she called her. Mariya went sullenly. "Don't think about it any longer. You know how foolish girls are and how jealous all our people are. Forgive them, it's the only thing to do," said Chungu.

But Mariya was not ready for that. She turned away and went back into the yard. The small children were now vigorously sweeping, some were carrying out the little wooden beds, and in another place the blankets were being put out to sun. A long file of children was coming from the stream, buckets filled with water on their heads. Near the school kitchen three children were pounding monkey nuts. It was Mariya's work to see one side of the yard swept and supervise the work in all the houses on her side. She went into the kitchen. "Why haven't you swept here?"

"Mukwai, it's Chipili's work and she's gone to find the *mwiko* (porridge-stick) she lost yesterday."

At this moment, Chipili came back with the lost article. "Where was it?" "In the rubbish pit," she answered.

"See that you wash it in boiling water before you make the *bwali* with it," Mariya said as she went out.

The kitchen children began to laugh as soon as she was out of earshot. "There's trouble on between her and the big girls. She says she's going to the village."

She strolled outside to see if all was clean, and old Bole-bole, the watchman, called out a greeting to her. She replied, and asked him who the people were coming along the road from Kasembe's. There was a long file of them, all heavily laden.

"People returning from town," he answered, and both stood looking.

" Surely it's Lise Mulenga." Mariya ran towards the road and called out " Lise ! "

Lise, for so it was, answered her, " Yes, I've come back. I'll come and see you this evening."

Mariya, a little cheered by having a bit of news to impart, went into the yard. " Lise Mulenga has come back from Masampa," she told a little group of girls standing outside the schoolroom.

Again the bell was ringing, and the children gathering in little groups before their houses—it was inspection time.

Mama was in Number Four—something wrong there evidently—and Mariya grinned, for Sela, the house-mother of Number Four, was one of the girls with whom she had quarrelled.

Everything having been duly inspected, the children ran to the kitchen for the baskets of *bwali* and pots of *munani* (relish). Each little house had its mats spread outside, and the food was placed in the middle, where a basin of water for washing fingers and cups of drinking water had already been set out. Mayo Mwenya said grace, and the meal began.

In each little group the house-mother was the first to start. She washed her hands, and then took with her fingers a little bit of the thick stiff porridge piled high in the basket. This she twisted into a ball with her finger and thumb, dipped it in the *munani* and ate. They all followed in age, going round and round until they had had enough. No word was spoken—there was nothing but the sound of eating for a few minutes. Those who were replete got up, washed their hands and moved off. The little ones remained perched like sparrows around the basket.

Maleta, head of Number Eight, was having trouble with one of her infants ; several gathered round to listen.

A very minute and scraggy child was sitting before the *bwali* basket, all the others had finished. She was making a determined attack on the remains. Maleta stood up, talking with great gesticulation—" I've told her to stop—and she won't. She has had enough."

" Go and tell Mama," someone suggested.

" I'll tell Mama," Maleta shouted at the child. It had no effect ; she went on imperturbably.

Maleta found Mama on the upstairs veranda cutting out bright yellow garments. " Mama—Ka John Bunyan is eating and won't stop—she'll be ill." The Mama left her work and went to the yard. Little John Bunyan, so called from her strictly puritan appearance, stern disapproval of all frivolity, and resentment of all outward authority, was eating determinedly.

" Johnny Bunyan, stop eating, you've had enough," Mama said sternly.

The small four-year-old raised its head and asked scornfully, " Doesn't a man know when his own stomach is full ? "

" Not a man of your size," said the teacher, eyeing the protruding middle of John Bunyan with some alarm. She seized the young rebel, removed her bodily from the food, put her in her house and shut the door. The audience laughed loudly and began to relate other exploits of the aforesaid John Bunyan.

The Mama had barely returned to her work when two girls came tearing after her. " She's eating beetles now." Back she went to the house, and found John Bunyan sitting Buddha-wise on the floor, the legs of a most obnoxious beetle protruding from her mouth. " How many have you eaten ? " she demanded.

" All," said young John Bunyan in triumph, and swallowed the creature with a gulp of enjoyment.

A dose of medicine was administered and John, most

righteously offended, marched into the teachers' house to endure in silence. Mariya was there. She hadn't eaten with the girls, she had been too angry. She received Johnny Bunyan as a kindred sufferer and shut the door.

School did not run easily that day. There were sulky faces, loud angry voices, work done indifferently. The spirit spread even to the babes in the Kindergarten, they became quarrelsome and naughty.

Lise Mulenga did not come up to the school that evening, but Chungu went down to see her. When she came back a little group gathered round her to hear the news. The small children were in bed and the yard was only faintly illumined by starlight.

"Why has she come?" "Is her husband with her?"

"She has left him, and says she won't go back—they were always quarrelling."

"But I thought they were happy and that Lise was helping the missionary there."

"So she was at first, but then they quarrelled and neither would forgive the other. It began about beer. Her husband wanted her to make him some. Lise wouldn't. She answered him angrily. There were many words and more and more words in their house. He got his beer elsewhere, went to other women's houses for it. Lise says that a woman down there told her she was foolish to refuse to make her husband a little beer, that it drove him from her, but she said she was a Christian and therefore refused."

Chungu hesitated and added thoughtfully, "It seems as if the Christian way separated Lise and her husband—and yet that can't be, for the Great Chief says nothing but death is to separate a man from his wife."

Many of them had now gathered round to listen, and much sympathy was expressed for Lise. But Chungu

broke in, " No. Lise was wrong. I'm sure she was. Her anger and her self-righteousness drove him away. She had no real love. I think she ought to have made him a little beer and then tried in all the ways she could to win him from it. She could have made him nice food—and a drink from honey, if they can get honey down there. Being a Christian is far more than refusing to make beer." Then she looked at them, " All you girls would be willing enough to refrain from making beer, but not one of you is willing to forgive her fellow for foolish words. Look what a horrid day we've had to-day—there has been no peace in our school."

They melted away most mysteriously, and Mariya, who had been sitting near Chungu, got up with a smile—" You've judged rightly, my anger is all over now."

. . . . . .

It was Christmas Eve; in the school compound a great crowd of people sat in silence. They had come from villages across the river and plains, for the word had gone forth that once again, this year, the manner of the Great Chief's Coming was going to be made known in the Girls' Village.

Two great fires lit up one end of the yard, and here and there golden lamps made light. The moon and stars hung low to lend what light they could. But it was towards the *nsaka* in the centre that all eyes were turned, for that held the great Light. Four large golden lamps stood as sentinels on either side of a low couch, on which reclined a woman, her eyes fixed on a low trough in which a little child lay on a bed of soft grass. A man sat near the couch, warming his hands over a fire of sticks, and on the other side a woman knelt, grinding flour. In the background there were sheep and goats lying asleep on straw. And from that little round *nsaka* the light streamed out into the big courtyard.

The sound of far-away singing came like a wind from the forest, and deepened the stillness. It came nearer, and Joseph left his little fire and went out and looked up into the clear, starlit sky. The woman stopped her grinding, sat back on her heels, and looked wonderingly at the mother. But Mary looked only towards the little child. The woman rose and, lowly bending, went to the baby and lifted him and gave him into the mother's arms, and for a time knelt there, watching.

The singing was now near, all about them it seemed, and it startled some shepherds sleeping round one of the big fires. Two of them jumped up in alarm, looked wildly around, and then woke their fellows.

As they stood there, mystified, afraid, from the darkness there came a tall figure clad in robes of white and gold, bearing aloft a star of golden light. The shepherds fell on their faces, the singing dropped to a whisper, and through it came the clear voice of the angel, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy. . . ."

They lifted their heads and looked towards the place where the angel was pointing, and then bowed in awe again, for the light was bright about them. Other angels had come, bearing their stars of light, and with them little child angels with golden wings outspread, dancing before them, the bells on their ankles keeping time with the swelling music.

They returned as they came, and while the unseen choir told the story, the shepherds arose, went towards the *nsaka*, and, bending low, entered and knelt there, wondering, worshipping.

One left his fellows and drew near to the Mother and Child; he knelt with his forehead to the earth. At length they rose, and with many backward looks returned, talking one with the other in whispers.

As they disappeared in the darkness, the music

changed, and from the east there came three regal figures, their faces lifted to the starry heavens. Slowly they came, carrying precious gifts, tall, dignified, serene, in robes of royal colours, with jewelled turbans on their heads. They entered the *nsaka*, made lowly obeisance, and knelt on the threshold. One by one they rose, took their gifts to the Child, and laid them at His feet. One took the Child's feet in his hands as he knelt before Him.

The music again was hushed and sweet, and the silence of the densely packed yard was intense as if all were sharing in that act of adoration.

The kings made obeisance again and left the *nsaka*, walking as those who had seen a high and holy mystery. As they neared the shadows they turned, lifted their arms as if hailing the Light of Light to which the star had led them, and withdrew into the darkness again. And a sigh like a great wind stirred amongst the people.

Again the music changed, and now it was gay, sweet music such as children love, and into the light they came, little children, dancing, carrying blue and red flowers. They met at the *nsaka* and knelt there, and greeted their King, as Africa does, by bending forward and clapping. Then they rose and sang of the flowers they brought—the blue of royalty and the crimson glowing rose of love. They took their flowers, following one another into the *nsaka*, each child kneeling to place her flower before Him. And singing and dancing, back they went into the darkness.

The music now became wistful as of those who seek, and from all sides came draped figures, protecting little faint candle-lights in their hands. These were they who, from all the quarters of the earth, guided by "that Light that lighteth every man," for ever seek until they find the Light of Light.

The music died into silence, as slowly they converged

upon the *nsaka*. They knelt in a semicircle on the threshold, placed their little flickering lights before them, and sang of their search, of their triumph in finding, and worshipped and adored. They left their little lights there, and went back.

Now came the triumphing music of a great army on the march—and a long procession came into sight: it was as if the morning stars sang together for joy at the approach of day, for all carried stars of golden light. The angels led the way, then followed the shepherds, the kings, the children, not only those who had carried their flowers, but the whole school, and at the end the seekers —a long procession of golden stars.

The watching crowd almost held its breath as they came nearer and surrounded the *nsaka*. The children carried their star lamps as if they were holy things and the light lit up their rapt faces. Round and round they went, singing out their welcome and their joy. It was the great hymn of the faithful of all the ages, " O Come, All Ye Faithful," that they sang as they reached the *nsaka*. When they came to the last verse, " Yea, Lord, we greet Thee," there was a pause, and they formed one vast circle, and together knelt and placed the stars before them, thus surrounding the *nsaka* with a ring of light. At the end again the sound of many clapping, and this time not only the circle around the *nsaka*, but old men and women in that vast audience were kneeling lowly to earth and clapping.

They rose, took their lamps, and singing the carol, " Like silver lamps in a distant shrine," walked slowly back in procession. The leaders walked into the centre of the great space that had been left clear, and the smaller children, carefully guarding their lamps and singing with all their hearts, went out into the darkness. Those at the end of the procession joined those standing in the

centre, and when the singing ceased, they knelt and lifted high their lamps, and it was a Cross of light the people saw. Softly they sang, " Jesu, Word of God Incarnate," then laid their lamps down and went away, leaving a Cross outlined in light upon the ground.

Before a sound broke the deep stillness, the six angels appeared without lights, walked into the centre, and sang as a prayer for the world, " Saviour, sprinkle many nations." Their voices rang out on the night air, true, sweet, beautiful, something for ever to be cherished in the hearts of some that listened.

Silence—then a great stirring—as if the watchers had come out of a marvellous dream. But until they got outside the school compound there were only whispers heard.

Lise Mulenga had been there—she thought of the year she had been a shepherd, when little Musonda, the bewitched baby she had found, had been the Jesus baby. She lingered behind. The Ba Mama were with the girls in the school, helping them to undress and put all the things away. A little group had already come out, and were sitting round one of the fires, their eyes towards the skies. They were looking for the star, wondering which it was. Lise said, " It's over there for me," pointing to the south towards the town where her husband was. They understood. " When are you going, Lise ? " " Soon. Soon as I can get food for the road and a pass. I'm waiting to ask Mama to write to the Government office for my pass." " We'll ask her for you. You go, you'll be left alone, most of the people have gone."

" I'll go then. Good-night. We old girls are all coming up to prayers to-morrow morning on the Great Chief's Birthday."

Very soon the silence of sleep dropped over the school compound and the wide forest land.

Chungu had been helping to carry in the things, now she stood saying good-night. " We often wonder whether if the star had come to us, we should have followed. Some of the people said they saw the star above our school to-night, and when they saw the Cross of stars on the ground, they thought it had fallen from the sky. There is the Cross, right above us," she said, pointing to the Southern Cross. Then turning to her teacher she said, " *This* is Christmas for the old people. They say it is this they want, this they dream of and wait for through the year. It is all real to them, they don't think it is us, their children—and we too think it is real. When I was once a shepherd I trembled going to the *nsaka*, and it was the Lord Jesus I worshipped. And to-night I saw Ethel trembling when she gave her gift, and tears fell when she held the baby's feet. Good-night, Mama." Then she turned again. " Perhaps it is real. He does come and He lets this be our gift to Him."

The Unseen and Eternal Splendour

WAS it worth while? Had she given ten years of young life for a dream? What was there to show for it all?

She stood on the hill overlooking the village, the glory of the dying day around her. The girls in the school compound were going to bed; she heard the far-off bell. She thought of them all, more than a hundred of them, each one so strangely dear. She looked to the south, across the river shining there, and thought of the great towns where some of her girls were living, many of them with little children of their own, and her heart was heavy with the thought of their desperate need.

And there were thousands of girls like hers. That faint shadow against the sky afar off was a mountain range in Belgian Congo, where was Elisabethville, the town that called so many, and destroyed so many. And who cared for African girls there?

A flicker of light close by made her turn. Some one had kindled a little fire, and round it five or six old women were sitting in silence. She moved towards them; they made a place for her, and she sat in the circle in that intimate fellowship of silence. Old, wrinkled, scantily clad African women, whose dim eyes had never seen beyond that great river now shining like a silver thread in the night-filled plain, whose thoughts had never soared beyond the dark imprisoning of their tribal tradition and custom. Her enemies, she had once called them, these old women, for they thwarted her at every turn. It was they who drew her girls back into all the dark ways of the past; it was they who would not let the children free themselves from the things that destroyed the bloom of childhood and marred the freshness of girlhood in their land.

The smouldering sticks burst into flame and illumined the still unfathomable faces; Africa, in all its mystery, its unknowingness and unknowableness was there, the long, impenetrable past slumbered in their eyes.

Old Nakatai was looking beyond the firelight as if she saw something. "We have come to the *nsaka* of God," she said. And again the long silence.

They had known it from their baby days, the *nsaka* in their villages. There the elders gathered together to discuss village affairs;

there the little children played in safety, in shade from the burning sun, in shelter from the down-streaming rain; there the weary traveller found rest; there justice was to be found and judgment meted out; there they welcomed their chief when he came to their village; the *nsaka* stood in the midst of life for them. Old Nakatai had looked through the firelight to the dark shadow of the church against the deep blue of the night sky, a light had flickered through the darkness of the past, and she had seen in that church the *nsaka* of God.

The missionary looked to the church standing on the hill, clear against the sky. She thought of Kabwe, who had come to her ten years ago, who had lied and deceived her so often, who again and again had gone back to the old ways, and who in the days to come would still fall in times of temptation. On the day of Kabwe's first Communion she had sat next to her, and suddenly the child had turned with eyes full of tears. "Mama, my hands are not clean. How can I touch it? My mouth is full of unclean words—how can I eat it? Let me go away."

And Nsama, original, headstrong, proud, often misjudged and misunderstood by her own people, and always disapproved of because of the flood of new life within her. She was not of the old pattern. What stormy times they had had! Looking out into the darkness of the forest she thought of one night when Nsama, Kabwe and about five smaller children had been alone in the forest. They had been returning to school from their homes, a six days' journey distant. Their fathers had paid two men to carry the girls' loads and help them along and protect them on the way. But the second day out the men had refused to go any farther; they left the children with their loads, alone, helpless. It was Nsama who took the lead. "We must go on to school, we ought to have been there a week ago. We'll all have to help. Now let's stop crying; it will be rather fun, we'll tell every one we meet that out fathers are just behind, then no one will harm us." The others cheered up; Nsama's way was infectious. The food was distributed, Kabwe and Ethel carrying the heavier share. Each child was given her sleeping mat and blanket, and Nsama showed them the easiest way of carrying them; the blanket was rolled up and put round one shoulder and tied under the arm.

With them was Rachel, Kabwe's little sister, coming to school for the first time, far too small to walk the seventy-six miles that remained. "You and I must carry her in turns until we can find some one to go ahead into Mbereshi to ask Mama to send out to meet us," said Nsama to Ethel. So on they went, seven children in the forest alone, on a road where there were few villages, each child heavily laden.

They came in very footsore one evening. The whole school ran out

to meet them, and they spoke with laughter of their adventures with no thought of the courageousness of it.

"When you were alone at nights, were you not afraid?"

"No," said Nsama with a laugh, "we had God with us."

She saw once again a little group of the children sitting before her, mere babies. She was talking to them of the cup of cold water given in a Great Chief's name. They had sat staring up at her with wide, round, unblinking eyes, and when she stopped, they had tumbled over one another like young puppies, bubbling with life and merriment. Two days later, while she was having tea on the upstairs veranda of her house, watching a long caravan of men carrying loads pass down the main road, she had heard the scuffling of little feet. Looking down, she had seen a file of children, eight or ten of them, come out of the school gate, each baby thing carrying a cup of cold water on its steady little head. On they went in silence to the main road, where the strange men were passing. There they knelt, took their cups in both hands,[1] and held them out. The great men, in silent amazement, put down their loads, and they too knelt, and with both hands took the offered cups.

She had followed them, and when they saw her, they said with radiant smiles, "We are giving cups of cold water in the name of the Great Chief."

She stood up; the splendour and glorious adventure of the Quest pulsed and throbbed through her. Worth while? Oh, most gloriously worth while! It was Life, full, abounding, triumphant. The glory of the Unseen and Eternal filled her eyes and her heart. A dream? Then the most splendid dream that ever stirred the heart of man, the dream of the blessed and glorious Kingdom of God.

"Good night, my mothers," she said softly to the old women.

They looked up. "Go in peace, child of ours," they said.

[1] In Africa to give and receive graciously one holds out both hands.

TO GROUPS WHO READ THIS BOOK

Parts of these stories leave question marks in your mind. If you would like to talk over any such points, perhaps one or another of the questions that follow may give you a starting place. Remember, this is not a sort of examination paper! It is just a help for thinking and discussing.

Chapter I.

1. Make a list of any points in which you think an English girl is (*a*) worse off, (*b*) better off, than Mwila.
2. What would you have done if you had been Mwila and found that your child was a *chinkula*?
3. Do you think you could explain to Mwila's people that their fear of a *chinkula* was groundless? Why don't we believe such things?

Chapter II.

1. Read again what Lise's mother said to her, beginning "The white man has his way and we have ours . . ." (p. 15). Do you think she was right? What would you say to one of your friends who said, "The black man has his way and we have ours"?
2. Lise had faith in the Great Chief. Make a list of the happenings that made it hard to hold that faith.
3. What do *we* know about the care of babies? Could we have helped Lise when Priskilla was so ill?

Chapter III.

1. What chief differences would Lise notice between the compound at Masampa and her home at Mbereshi?
2. Chishimba refused the little pots (p. 34). What had Mwila done? What would you have done in their place?
3. In what ways did Chishimba help Lise? Are these ways in which any friends in any land can help each other? Perhaps we know girls who, like Lise, are living away from home. What could we do to make things easier for them?

Chapter IV.

1. If some of the dances were bad, why didn't the Christians forbid them all? From this and the earlier chapters illustrate the ways in which the mission used African customs and ways of life.

2. Think of the stories of Kabwe, of Nsama and of Chungu. Was it worth while for each to take the stand she did? Do we know anything of similar difficulties?

3. (i) Forgive, but not forget.
(ii) Forgive, if the person is very sorry.
(iii) Forgive after a punishment.
(iv) Forgive freely and forget.

Did Namwelyu follow any of these ways? Which was Christ's way? Which is our way?

CHAPTER V.

1. "It's no good praying if you don't feel like it—it would be a lie." Do you agree with Mariya altogether? Partly? Where was she wrong?

2. "Self-righteousness" is perhaps another word for "Being a prig." What is the difference between that and real goodness?

3. If you were an African, and had heard little or nothing of Jesus Christ, what impression do you think the Christmas Eve celebration would make on your mind? Can you imagine something of the same sort helping English people? Make a possible plan.

WAYS OF HELPING.

African girls enjoy toys and pretty clothes. What sort of things might we send as gifts to an African girls' school? To an African hospital? To an Infant Welfare Centre? Your missionary society will be able to tell you more about these and other possibilities.

And African folk have a very great deal to give us, haven't they? Choose one story from the epilogue, and think about it quietly, with thanksgiving for its courage or humility or love, and a prayer for such graces in your own heart.

It is an honour for us to be taken into the confidence of these real girls in Mbereshi. We will try, will we not, to live up to that honour.

OTHER BOOKS ON AFRICA

THE MASTER'S COLLEGE
3 3540 00027 6758

BLACK

By BASIL MATHEWS **1s.** *net; post free* **1s. 1d.**

A book for young men and women on the youth of Africa to-day.

THE NEW AFRICA

By DONALD FRASER **2s.** *net; post free* **2s. 2½d.**

A book on recent movements in Africa.

AFRICA AND HER PEOPLES

By F. DEAVILLE WALKER **2s.** *net; post free* **2s. 2½d.**

A "background" book for teachers and others.

IF I LIVED IN AFRICA

By CICELY HOOPER **1s.** *net; post free* **1s. 1d.**

A short, simple "background" book for young people profusely illustrated.

WHITE HEROINES IN AFRICA

By C. E. PADWICK **1s.** *net; post free* **1s. 1d.**

A book for leaders of girls' Bible classes, girls' clubs, etc.

From all Missionary Societies